

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01
TRSE-00 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 PC-01 /081 W
-----161323Z 053564 /46

R 151335Z MAR 77

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4419

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0211

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ET

SUBJECT: STORM CLOUDS BREAKUP OVER ASMARA

REF: ASMARA 0193 (DTG 111200Z MAR 77)

1. WE SEE INDICATIONS THAT THE STORM BREWING WITHIN THE SECOND DIVISION (REFTEL) IN OPPOSITION TO THE DIRG IS NOW BEGINNING TO DISSIPATE. FIRST, IN AN UNEXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 14, ASMARA RADIO INSTRUCTED ALL INDUSTRIAL WORKERS TO RETURN TO THEIR JOBS THE FOLLOWING MORNING. (FACTORIES WERE CLOSED FEB 10.) UPON THEIR RETURN, ELECTRIC POWER WAS RESTORED AND THE FACTORIES IMMEDIATELY RESUMED PRODUCTION (ASMARA 0134, CONFIDENTIAL

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DTG 160700Z FEB 77).

2. A SECOND INDICATION WAS THE MASSAWA CONVOY, WHICH HAD JUST RETURNED MARCH 13 FROM ITS FIRST ROUNDTRIP IN 12 DAYS, WAS AGAIN FORMED AND DEPARTED ASMARA ON MARCH 15. THE RESUMPTION OF MORE FREQUENT CONVOYS SHOULD RESULT IN A NORMALIZATION OF THE FLOW OF POL PRODUCTS. AS A FIRST STEP, MOGAS SALES ARE TO RESUME

ON MARCH 16. THE ONLY HITCH STILL EVIDENT IS THAT AVGAS, WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY THE CO OF THE EAF, HAS NOT YET BEEN RELEASED TO EAL, THUS CAUSING SOME DISRUPTION OF FLIGHT SCHEDULES.

3. BY ALL APPEARANCES, TENSIONS HAVE RELAXED AT SECOND DIVISION HQ. OFFICERS AND MEN HAVE RETURNED TO WEARING THEIR NORMAL KHAKI DUTY UNIFORMS IN LIEU OF THEIR COMBAT FATIGUES. MOST OFFICERS, WHO WERE RECENTLY OBSERVED CARRYING SIDEARMS, HAVE NOW DISPENSED WITH THEM, AS THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE WITHIN THE SECOND DIVISION COMPOUND DISPLAYS ALL THE ASPECTS OF NORMAL DUTY AND TRAINING. NO LONGER ARE MEETINGS OF A POLITICAL NATURE EVIDENT.

4. IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT WHATEVER BARGAIN HAS BEEN STRUCK BETWEEN THE DIRG AND SECOND DIVISION DISSIDENTS ENCOMPASSES LITTLE MORE THAN AGREEMENT TO MEET SECOND DIVISION'S BREAD AND BUTTER GRIEVANCES. THESE GRIEVANCES, WHICH HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD REPEATEDLY BY EPMG TROOPS IN ERITREA, INCLUDE ROTATION OF MEN OR UNITS TO OTHER AREAS OF ETHIOPIA, PAY AND LEAVE PROBLEMS, AND BENEFITS FOR DISABLED AND WIDOWS. THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT ANY AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUES SUCH AS A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE ERITREAN SITUATION OR THE RETURN TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, BOTH OF WHICH ARE REPORTED TO BE MATTERS OF CONCERN TO EPMG TROOPS HERE.

5. COMMENT: IF THE STORM CLOUDS ARE, IN FACT, DISSIPATING OVER ASMARA, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT THE RETURN TO NORMAL MILITARY OPERATION WILL BE GRADUAL. THE DISSIDENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY HAVE APPARENTLY PROVED THEIR POINT AND WILL WAIT TO SEE WHAT THE FOLLOW-UP FROM ADDIS WILL BE. THE INSURGENTS, WHO SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PULLING THEIR

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PUNCHES IN RECENT WEEKS ESPECIALLY IN THE FIGHTING AROUND ELABERET, SHOULD IMMEDIATELY BECOME AWARE OF THE CHANGE IN THE ATTITUDE OF THE EPMG TROOPS IN ERITREA, AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO STEP-UP THEIR ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE ETHIOPIAN GARRISONS AND SUPPLY SYSTEM.

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